

U.S. Department of Justice
Community Relations Service



CRS FACT SHEET

Rose Ochl, Director, Community Relations Service

The Community Relations Service (CRS), an arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, is a specialized Federal conciliation service available to State and local officials to help resolve and prevent racial and ethnic conflict, violence and civil disorder. When governors, mayors, police chiefs, and school superintendents need help to defuse racial or ethnic crises, they turn to CRS. CRS helps local officials and residents tailor locally defined resolutions when conflict and violence threaten community stability and well-being. Created by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, CRS is the only Federal agency dedicated to preventing and resolving racial and ethnic tensions, incidents, and civil disorders. It assists State and local units of government, private and public organizations, and community groups in restoring community racial stability and harmony.

Services Available

For more than 30 years, CRS has been asked to provide its experienced mediators to help local communities settle destructive conflicts and disturbances relating to race, color, or national origin. In 1997, CRS's 34 highly skilled conflict resolution professionals helped bring more than 600 cases of conflict to peaceful closure in all 50 States.

CRS lends its services when requested or when it believes peaceful community relations may be threatened. It relies solely on impartial mediation practices and established conflict resolution procedures to help local leaders resolve problems and restore community stability. CRS conciliators assist in identifying the sources of violence and conflict and utilizing specialized crisis management and violence reduction techniques which work best for each community. CRS has no law enforcement authority and does not impose solutions, investigate or prosecute cases, or assign blame or fault. CRS mediators are required by law to conduct their activities in confidence, without publicity, and prohibited from disclosing confidential information.

CRS is available to work onsite with State and local officials and community leaders. CRS can:

- ☐ Contribute expertise and guidance on methods and policies

- ☐ Build strategies with State and local governments and community groups to prevent and respond to civil disorders.
- ☐ Improve lines of communication among Federal, State, and local public officials and community leaders and residents.
- ☐ Help establish programs to eliminate racial misconceptions and build multiracial coalitions.
- ☐ Assess community relations involving racial and ethnic tensions.

Significant Accomplishments 1994-1997

During the past four years, a period of heightened racial tension and conflict in our Nation, CRS has helped hundreds of communities. Examples of CRS assistance:

- ☐ **Civil Disorders.** CRS race relations skills were called upon to help mayors, police chiefs, and community leaders restore stability and order. From the civil unrest in Los Angeles following the Rodney King case to the civil disturbances over police shootings in St. Petersburg, Florida, CRS was "in the streets" helping police, local officials, and leaders end the violence and begin constructive dialogue. Once stability was restored, CRS provided technical assistance and training to avert new violence and improve police-community relations.
- ☐ **Church Burnings.** In response to the President's call for a comprehensive response by Federal agencies to address church burnings, CRS staff have worked directly with more

"Our rich texture of racial, religious, and political diversity will be a godsend in the 21st century. Great rewards will come to those who can live together, learn together, work together, forge new ties that bind together."

President Clinton

than 180 rural, suburban, and urban governments in 17 states to help eliminate racial distrust and polarization, promote multiracial construction of new buildings, conduct race relations training for community leaders and law enforcement officers, and provide technical assistance in ways to bring together law enforcement agencies and minority neighborhoods. CRS serves as a principal partner on the President's Church Arson Task Force.

- ❑ **Schools.** In 1997, CRS services were requested by more than 113 school districts and 75 colleges. CRS was asked to help quell racial conflicts and violence, reduce tensions, develop plans to avoid potential incidents, and conduct training programs for students, teachers, administrators and parents. CRS offers six school-based programs:

Student Problem Identification and Resolution (SPIR). This conflict resolution program is designed to identify and diffuse racial tensions involving students at the senior and junior high levels. *SPIR* assists school administrators in addressing racial and ethnic tensions through a carefully structured process that involves students, teachers, administrators, and parents. A further development of this program, called *SPIRIT*, involves local police agencies as key partners in the design of an action plan. CRS now trains police officers to conduct the *SPIR* program as a part of a process to strengthen cooperation among police and schools.

CRS also offers the following training sessions: *Conflict Dialogues*, *Conflict Mediation*, *Student Problem Solving Skill Building*, *Teacher Conflict Management Training*, and *Administration Conflict Prevention and Management*.

- ❑ **Demonstrations and Marches.** CRS mediators, at the request of march organizers and local officials, assisted in event planning to reduce racial misunderstandings and conflicts and to minimize the prospect of any confrontations. Key assistance was provided to the Million Man March and the National Hispanic March in Washington, D.C., the Atlanta Summer Olympic Games, the Republican National Convention in San Diego, and the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.
- ❑ **Hate Crimes.** In 1997, CRS was involved in more than 135 incidents of hate crimes. In Philadelphia, CRS joined with the U.S. Attorney, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, local law enforcement agencies, and the Anti-Defamation League in presenting a Hate Crimes Symposium for police on response to hate crimes.
- ❑ **Housing.** CRS provided technical assistance to police departments and community agencies in Vidor, Texas, when

1995, CRS helped prevent and resolve racial conflicts over the integration of a public housing complex in Grand Saline, Texas. CRS worked with community leaders, housing complex security, and local law enforcement and school officials to coordinate a response to issues raised by the integration activities.

- ❑ **Environmental Justice.** CRS addressed conflicts over environmental issues in several States. In Hartford, Connecticut, CRS mediated an agreement between city officials and community leaders in 1995, which resolved health concerns stemming from the North Meadows Landfill. In Portsmouth, Virginia, CRS was instrumental in facilitating community involvement in the development of a joint cleanup plan. CRS assisted community leaders in Ferris, Texas, in addressing community concerns over environmental issues associated with the enlargement of the sanitary landfill.
- ❑ **Native Americans.** CRS has provided conflict resolution assistance on a wide variety of issues and disputes involving tribes, communities, and Federal, State, and local officials. CRS assistance resolved issues of reservation lands for sanitary and hazardous waste landfill, tribal voting rights, leasing of tribal lands to non-tribal members for housing and business, cross-deputization between tribal and non-tribal law enforcement agencies, jurisdictional disputes between State and local governments and tribes over gaming activities, and return of ancient Native American remains and artifacts unearthed by new land development.
- ❑ **Federal-Local Partnerships.** CRS' positive relationships with minority community organizations help support other Federal efforts, including community-oriented policing, Operation Weed and Seed, Pulling American Communities Together (PACT), and Americorps.

CRS Mission and Goals

In accordance with Title X of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 USC §2000g, CRS seeks to prevent or resolve community conflicts and tensions arising from actions, policies, and practices perceived to be discriminatory on the basis of race, color, or

"We must talk openly about race relations in this country. We must talk with respect, we must listen with a listening ear, we must get rid of the angry rhetoric that has so marked this issue in so many instances of late."

Attorney General Reno
January 12, 1997

national origin. CRS provides services, including conciliation, mediation, and technical assistance, directly to people and their communities to help them resolve conflicts that tear at the fabric of our increasingly diverse society.

CRS Program Goals:

- ☐ To create opportunities and mechanisms for constructive civic discourse on issues of race and ethnicity. CRS helps give national leadership and assistance to efforts to establish "places and spaces" for candid race relations discussions.
- ☐ To provide a high caliber of conflict resolution and prevention services to those communities most vulnerable to significant race relations tensions, conflicts, and violence.
- ☐ To build enhanced dispute resolution capabilities in local communities, including high schools, colleges and universities, so that local institutions will be able to resolve their own conflicts without external assistance.
- ☐ To establish bridges between minority groups and law enforcement organizations in order to improve relations and community safety, and to reduce the potential for community conflict.
- ☐ To improve the preparedness of communities to respond to civil unrest, including activities by hate groups, through the provision of training, contingency planning, and technical assistance.

CRS Customer Service Standards

Our goal is to provide sensitive and effective conflict prevention and resolution services. CRS will meet the following Standards:

- ☐ We will clearly explain the process that CRS uses to address racial and ethnic conflicts and our role in that process.
- ☐ We will provide opportunities for all parties involved to contribute to and work toward a solution to the racial or ethnic conflict.
- ☐ If you are a participant in a CRS training session or conference, you will receive timely and useful information and materials that will assist you in preventing or minimizing racial and ethnic tensions. If you would like more information, we will work with you to identify additional materials and resources to meet your needs within three weeks of learning your need.

when your community notifies CRS or CRS becomes aware of the crisis.

- ☐ In non-crisis situations we will contact you to discuss our services within three days of when your community notifies CRS or when CRS becomes aware of the situation.

"We can never completely correct past racial injustices, but in our struggle to eliminate racial contempt and prejudice we will prevent the past from repeating itself and build stronger communities."

Rose Ochi
 Director, CRS
 March 21, 1997

CRS Headquarters, Regional and Field Offices

Headquarters Office

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Regional Offices and States Within Each Region

Region I - New England
 Regional Director: Martin Walsh
 99 Summer Street, Suite 1820
 Boston, MA 02110
 (617) 424-5715
 (617) 424-5727 (fax)
 Servicing: CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT

Region II - Northeast
 Regional Director: Patricia Glenn
 26 Federal Plaza, Room 36-118
 New York, NY 10278
 (212) 264-0700
 (212) 264-2143 (fax)
 Servicing: NJ, NY, PR, VI

CRS Regional and Field Offices *(continued)*

Region III - Mid-Atlantic

Acting Regional Director: Henry Mitchum
2nd and Chestnut Streets, Room 208
Philadelphia, PA 19106
(215) 597-2344
(215) 597-9148 (fax)
Servicing: DC,DE,MD,PA,VA,WV

Region IV - Southeast

Regional Director: Ozell Sutton
75 Piedmont Avenue, NE, Room 900
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(404) 331-6853
(404) 331-4471 (fax)
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Miami Field Office - Region IV

Field Office Director: Thomas Battles
51 SW First Avenue, Room 424
Miami, FL 33130
(305) 536-5206
(305) 536-7363

Region V - Mid-West

Regional Director: Jesse Taylor
55 West Monroe Street, Suite 420
Chicago, IL 60603
(312) 353-4391
(312) 353-4390 (fax)
Servicing: IL,IN,MI,MN,OH,WI

Detroit Field Office - Region V

Field Office Dir.: Gustavo Gaynett
211 West Fort Street, Suite 1404
Detroit, MI 48226
(313) 226-4010
(313) 226-2568 (fax)

Region VI - Southwest

Regional Director: Gilbert Chavez
1420 West Mockingbird Lane, Suite 250
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(214) 655-8184 (fax)
Servicing: AR,LA,NM,OK,TX

Houston Field Office - Region VI

Field Office Director: Efrain Martinez
515 Rusk Avenue, Room 12605
Houston, TX 77002
(713) 718-4861
(713) 718-4862 (fax)

Region VII - Central

Regional Director: Atkins Warren
1100 Main Street, Suite 1320
Kansas City, MO 64106
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Servicing: IA,KS,MO,NE

Region VIII - Rocky Mountain

Acting Regional Director: Silke Hansen
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Region IX - Western

Field Office Director: Booker Neal
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Los Angeles Field Office - Region IX

Acting Regional Director: Stephen Thom
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Region X - Northwest

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